

City of Cambridge – Recycling Advisory Committee

December 10, 2005 Meeting - Minutes taken by Paul Schlaver

Members Attending: Rob Gogan, Harvard University; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Paul Schlaver, Cambridge Consumers' Council; David Johnston, Cambridge Housing Authority; Shaunna Schiller, FCR-Boston/Casella.

Guests Attending: Kelly Dunn, Recycling Program Manager; Randi Mail, Recycling Director; Kim Park, Recycling Division Intern; Terry Smith, Chamber of Commerce

Proposed Changes to the Refuse & Litter Ordinance

The meeting focused on the proposed changes to the City's Refuse & Litter Ordinance, Chapter 8.24 of the Municipal Code. Recently, there has been a major focus on the significant presence of rats in Cambridge, especially in Area Four. Some community meetings have occurred as well as public discussion at City Council meetings.

Randi offered a thorough summary of the proposed ordinance changes the Council is considering, including:

- 1) No plastic bags on the curb for pickup; all trash must be in proper barrels with tight-fitting lids;
- 2) Trash cannot be put on curb before 6pm the day before (currently not before 3pm);
- 3) The ordinance change would go into effect 90 days after enactment.

Some alternatives discussed to date include:

- Same day set out with pickup starting at 8AM, then allowing plastic bag use instead of only barrels;
- That the city buy in bulk and offer at wholesale cost the needed barrels; or
- Twice per week trash pickup.

Some concern about the impact on the city's recycling efforts has been voiced at the City Council level and much more was voiced during today's meeting of the committee.

A legal question has been raised as to whether the City is currently in violation of the state code that says that no plastic bags can be sitting on the curb overnight.

Some concerns raised during this City Council debate and information gathering process to date include the issue of the cost of the barrels for the residents; the concern about the weight of the full barrels for the trash pickup workers; and the issue of lost/damaged lids that is anticipated.

Randi mentioned that DPW is interviewing candidates for a new Compliance Officer position. This person will answer to the Recycling Director and will enforce trash and recycling rules in the existing Ordinance, (such as the 50 lb limit per barrel, 32 gallon container size limit on trash barrels, proper setout times and mandatory recycling). The Compliance Officer will enforce any changes that may be enacted as described above.

All in attendance expressed their views and unanimously did NOT want to see changes to the ordinance at this time with thoughts ranging from:

- Consider any ordinance change a trial period only and study further;
- Review current ban on nighttime commercial trash removal as a significant factor in the rats problem;
- Focus on where the rat problem is more prevalent: waste storage vs. curbside setout. Look at improper storage and possible enforcement in that regard;
- Work toward curbside collection of food waste for composting;
- Explore options to provide technical assistance and possible financial support for improved storage of trash prior to pickup day;
- Consider providing lidded barrels as part of a long-term waste abatement plan. For example, provide barrels suitable for automation and a uniform 3-barrel system for trash, single stream recycling and organics.

If the Council chose to go ahead with the proposed barrel requirement and same-day set out under consideration, the Committee suggested that the City:

- Consider not enforcing same day setout/collection for Holiday-week Friday route.
- Consider a winter moratorium on barrel requirement considering snow banks.

It was proposed that the committee formally weighs in this

***On 12/19/05 the Cambridge City Council voted for the following changes to take effect 4/3/06:**

- Refuse must be placed in rodent resistant barrels with tight fitting lids, if placed on the curb the night before collection.
- Barrels cannot be placed on the sidewalk before 6pm the night before collection.
- Trash in plastic bags can only be placed at the curb the day of collection, no later than 7am.

debate via a letter to the City Council expressing our concerns. Rob agreed draft the letter.

Random Tidbits

- Randi said 5 new public recycling bins are installed in Porter Square; for a total of 7, soon.
- Rob announced that a C&D state waste ban will take effect on 7/1/06 of asphalt, brick, concrete, metal & wood. Visit <http://mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/managing.htm>.
- Shaunna offered some handouts and commented that the commodity price for paper may be going down.